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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving active listening skills and the ability to follow oral directions. The targeted population consisted of third and fourth grade students in three different elementary schools. Two schools are located in far northern suburbs outside a large midwestern city. The other school is a southern suburb of a smaller midwestern city. The problem of poor listening skills was documented with teacher, parent, and student surveys, standardized testing scores, and teacher checklists. Analysis of probable cause indicated that lack of instruction, environmental issues, physical conditions of students, and psychological factors may affect the students' listening. Review of the research also indicated that students were not introduced to listening skills in the school setting. A review of the solution strategies suggested by other researchers, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the development of listening skill instruction and the reduction of noise levels in the environment. The program included cooperative learning activities, direct instruction of active listening, and various listening activities. Post intervention data indicated an increase in student use of active listening skills and an improvement in student awareness of the components of active listening. (Contains 29 references and 9 tables of data. Appendixes contain survey instruments and pre and posttests.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING STUDENT ABILITY TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS THROUGH THE USE OF LISTENING SKILLS INSTRUCTION

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School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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Field-Based Masters Program

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This report describes a program for improving active listening skills and the ability to follow oral directions. The targeted population consisted of third and fourth grade students in three different elementary schools. Two schools are located in far northern suburbs outside a large midwestern city. The other school is a southern suburb of a smaller midwestern city. The problem of poor listening skills was documented with teacher, parent, and student surveys, standardized testing scores, and teacher checklists.

Analysis of probable cause indicated that lack of instruction, environmental issues, physical conditions of students, and psychological factors may affect the students' listening. Review of the research also indicated that students were not introduced to listening skills in the school setting.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by other researchers, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the development of listening skill instruction and the reduction of noise levels in the environment. The program included cooperative learning activities, direct instruction of active listening, and various listening activities.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in student use of active listening skills and an improvement in student awareness of the components of active listening.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted third grade, third grade gifted math, and fourth grade classes exhibit a deficiency in listening skills that are displayed through their inability to follow oral directions. Evidence for the existence of such a problem includes teacher anecdotal records, results from surveys of parents, students, and teachers, and listening post-tests.

Immediate Problem Context

The research is being conducted at three sites. The three schools exhibit a wide range of student population. The racial/ethnic background of the students is primarily white, with the largest population of minorities at Site A (Table 1). Although Site B has the highest amount of low-income students, Site A has the largest Limited English Proficient (L.E.P.) students (Table 2). The attendance at Site A and Site C are above the state average. The attendance at Site B is just below state average. There are no chronic truancies in any of the sites (Table 3). The three sites will be described separately.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Islander	Native American	Total
Site A	78.7%	5.4%	8.0%	7.7%	0.3%	1,169
Site B	96.0 %	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	527
Site C	96.0%	1.8%	0.5%	1.6%	0.1%	1,221

Table 2

Low Income and Limited English Proficient Students (L.E.P.)

	Low Income	L.E.P.
Site A	6.2%	6.3%
Site B	7.5%	0.0%
Site C	1.5%	1.1%

Table 3

Attendance and Truancy

	Attendance	Truancy
Site A	96.1%	0.0%
Site B	94.64%	0.0%
Site C	95.5%	0.0%

Site A

Site A is an elementary school that contains grades two and three. The targeted students are in the third grade gifted math class. The school is part of a large, growing district. The district contains primary, elementary, intermediate, and middle schools. The total enrollment of the school was 1,169, as of October 1998, of which 616 were third graders. The average class size is 22. Due to continual growth, space is limited. Art and music classes are on a cart.

The elementary school at Site A has 110 staff members, of these, 85 are certified staff and 25 are support staff. The staff is 5% male and 95% female. The teachers have an average of 8.7 years of teaching experience, with 40.9% having attained a masters degree or beyond. There are 25 second grade teachers and 29 third grade teachers. Special teachers include: four physical education teachers, three music teachers, two art teachers, one computer teacher, three speech and language teachers, three learning disability teachers, two English as a second language teachers, three reading specialists, three math specialists, one advanced math teacher, one advanced language arts teacher, two social workers, one school psychologist, one occupational therapist, one librarian, and one nurse.

The students in the targeted group are part of the daily gifted math class. The students are in third grade, but are learning the fourth grade math curriculum. The students leave their regular classrooms and attend gifted math in a small classroom in the library. There are 15 students in the gifted math group.

The language arts series at Site A is a literature–based program with an emphasis on incorporating science and social studies within the units. Reading and writing workshops are used regularly to reinforce skills learned during language arts. In third grade, power writing is a tool used to assist in organizing students' writing. The school adopted a new math series that encourages regular use of manipulatives. One method the school uses to assess students is keeping portfolios for both language arts and math.

Due to the size of the elementary school, there are a variety of extra-curricular activities available to the second and third graders. Students are able to take both academic and leisure classes. For example, students can take Spanish classes, computer classes, or art classes. The gym teachers also provide different options throughout the year for after school activities, such as dance class, floor hockey, and volleyball. In addition, the school has an after-school care club for students whose parent work and are unable to be home when the bus arrives.

Since there are almost 60 second and third grade classrooms, the school is divided into four teams consisting of second grade, third grade, and specialists assigned to work with the team. The large size of the elementary school is positively related to the growth of the community in which it is located. In contrast to the size of Site A, Site B is more condensed in size.

Site B

Site B is located in a rural, middle class town. The district consists of one building, which houses kindergarten through eighth grade. The total enrollment as of January 1999 was 527 students. The targeted class consists of 20 third graders. There

are three sections of each grade, with an average class size of 19. A recent addition to the school added extra classrooms, to provide for future growth.

The school at Site B has 53 staff members, of whom 38 are licensed staff and 15 are support staff. Twenty-six percent of the staff is male and 74% is female. For the lower grades, there are three teachers in each grade. Special teachers include: four physical education teachers, one music teacher, one band teacher, one art teacher, one computer teacher, one speech teacher, three learning disability teachers, one reading teacher, one gifted teacher, one social worker, one psychologist, one librarian, and one nurse.

Extra-curricular activities are available to the students, but only for grades 4-8. Limited resources and interest make the program small. Some activities are computer club, battle of the books, and athletic groups for the middle school students.

Site B uses trade books to teach language arts, grouping them by overall themes. The themes also include science and social studies. The district uses the University of Chicago Math Program, which was adopted one grade at a time. Portfolios are used to assess the progress of the students. Sites B and C are similar with the use of the Chicago Math Program and portfolios.

Site C

Site C is located in an upper class community. The district is comprised of two elementary schools and a junior high school. The elementary school of Site C consists of third and fourth grade. Total enrollment is approximately 300 students as of 1998. The average class size is 18.8.

The school at Site C has a staff of approximately 39 members. Twenty-nine percent are certified staff and 10 are support staff. The average teaching experience is 14.1 years, with 45.4% who have earned a master's degree or beyond. There are eight third grade classes and seven fourth grade classes. The targeted class consists of 22 fourth grade students. Special teachers include: two physical education teachers, two music teachers, one art teacher, one Spanish teacher, one advanced math teacher, one librarian, one speech and language teacher, two learning disability teachers, one social worker, one school psychologist, one occupational therapist, and one school nurse

The language arts program used in Site C is from a basal series. Combining reading and writing to develop language skills is stressed throughout this program. Reading workshop is used to reinforce reading skills. The University of Chicago Math Program is used throughout the district. This program which was recently adopted, surrounds a regular use of manipulatives for learning the math concepts. Portfolio use is an optional way of assessing student's growth throughout the school year. Technology is an important element in the day to day teaching practices throughout the district. The students have access to digital cameras, computer scanners, Internet service, and Power Point. These materials are used within conjunction of the curriculum and can be used as an individual, group, or whole class teaching tool. The school provides limited extra-curricular activities such as math and science explorations for both third and fourth graders. Site C is in the most affluent community out of all the sites.

The Surrounding Community

The sites are located in very diverse communities. All sites are located within a 50-mile area. Sites A and C are located in suburban settings, whereas Site B is situated in a rural community.

Site A

The community of Site A is located in a far northern suburb outside a large mid-western city. It is 35 miles from an international airport and in close proximity to a major interstate highway system. Within the last decade the community has grown from a predominantly rural setting to a congested suburban community. The majority of the new residents are middle to upper middle class families with school age children. The district encompasses an area of 35 square miles, and is comprised of several unincorporated subdivisions and small villages.

The population of Site A's community is approximately 35,000. The 1995 census shows a population consisting of 94% White non-Hispanic, 4% Hispanic, with Asian Pacific Islander, African American, and native American making up the remaining 2%.

The majority of the adult community members of Site A have acquired a college degree. The median family household income according to the 1995 census figure, is $52,000. Employment characteristics of the population are represented by major corporations, retail, manufacturing, amusement, health care, military, and educational fields.

Over the last 50 years, Site A has grown from several one-room schoolhouses to a campus consisting of four grade level centers. The buildings are centrally located within the community, and not within the neighborhoods. This requires that all the students

utilize the bus service provided by the district. Site A is composed of a primary building (K-2), elementary building (2-3), intermediate building (4-5), and a middle school (6-8).

The faculty population at Site A is 337, of which 87.3% are females and 12.7% are males. The faculty consists of 98.8% White non-Hispanic, 0.6% Hispanic, 0.6% Asian Pacific Islander, 0.0% African American, and 0.0% Native American. The pupil-teacher ratio is 18.3:1. The pupil-administrator ratio is 260.0:1. The average teacher salary is $35,104. The average administrator salary is $76,528. The operating expenditure per pupil is $5,362. The district administration includes 1 superintendent, 1 business manager, 1 director of pupil personnel services, 1 director of building grounds and transportation, 5 principals, and 10 assistant principals.

In 1999, an educational referendum was passed, largely due to the support of parent groups. These groups include: Parent Teacher Association and Friends of the School. This referendum passed on the first attempt, unlike previous educational referendums. A building referendum was passed in 1996, which resulted in the construction of a new middle school. The building of this school reduced class size and increased technological resources for teachers and students. Even with smaller class sizes, listening continues to be a problem. Site A is an immense district with grade level centers, which contrasts with the small size of Site B.

Site B

Site B is situated in a rural community, between two major cities. A major interstate is nearby and an international airport is 30 miles away. The community is largely rural, but is growing as people move from nearby suburbs to the quiet area of Site

B. Most of the residents grew up in the community, and are now raising their children there. The district covers 30 square miles.

The population of Site B's community is approximately 4,100. The 1995 census shows a population consisting of 98% White non-Hispanic, 1% African American, and 1% Hispanic.

In Site B, the majority of adult community members have achieved a high school degree. According to the 1995 census, the average household income is $41,000. Clerical, service, sales, and farming represent employment characteristics of the population.

The building that houses Site B's district has grown over the years. A recent addition to the building allowed the middle school to be located in a different section of the school from K-4. As the school is located in a neighborhood, students from outlying areas are bused in.

The faculty population at Site B is 53, of which 74% are female and 26% are male. The faculty consists of 100% White non-Hispanic. The pupil-teacher ratio is 13.9:1. The pupil-administrator ratio is 263:1. The average teacher salary is $36,000. The average administrator salary is $65,000. The operating expenditure per pupil is $6,200. The district administration includes one superintendent and one principal. Site C also only requires a small administration team.

Site C

Site C is located in a northern suburb of a mid-western city. This growing upper class community consists of families with many school age children. Most families earn six digit incomes annually, or inherited money from their family. The most common

professions of the parents are in the medical and legal fields. This district is widely known for parents maintaining continual communication with school personnel throughout the year.

The population of Site C has grown to approximately 8,499 residents. The growth of the community has affected the district in that an addition was built on to the elementary school to accommodate the growing number of students. Site C is composed of the primary building (K-2), elementary building (3-4), and a middle school (5-8). Each one of these schools is located within neighborhoods of the community, and not centrally located.

The faculty population at Site C is 94, of which 87.8% are females and 12.2% are males. The faculty consists of 96.8% are White-non Hispanic, 2.1% is black, 1.1% is Hispanic, 0.0% is Asian/Islander, 0.0% is Native American. The pupil-teacher ratio is 15.2:1. The pupil-administrator ratio is 152.6:1. The average teacher salary is $49,792. The average administrator salary is $96,435. The operating expenditure per pupil is $9,930. The district administration includes one superintendent, one business manager, one director of pupil personnel services, one director of building and grounds, and three principals. Regardless of the economic background of each of the sites, listening skills are consistently a problem.

National Context of the Problem

Listening is an area that has been a continual concern on a national level. "Educators around the world have expressed concern over students' poor listening skills and have suggested that children's listening skills are steadily deteriorating" (Jalongo, 1995, p.13). This social skill greatly influences students' ability to perform well in the

classroom. Teaching listening is extremely critical to students' development. Fusco and Fountain (1999) stated:

> Though schools spend very little time developing listening skills, we do know that we listen more than we speak, read, or write . . . Listening is a critical component of thinking and language comprehension. It is the most used channel for learning because it receives and forwards so many messages to the brain. (p. 243)

Listening skills are a vital part of the learning process. "Of all the language skills that human beings acquire, listening is the one they use the most throughout life, particularly during early childhood" (Jalongo, 1996, p. 21). Unfortunately, listening strategies are not being taught within the classroom. These listening skills are often taken for granted by teachers. "Teachers are often frustrated with students' lack of listening skills, but most find it difficult to fit listening instruction into an already full day" (Brent & Anderson, 1993, p. 123).

For reasons stated, listening skills are vital to the success of students. They need to be taught the importance of listening skills beginning at an early age. Listening is the core of communication skills, which is needed in all aspects of their academic, professional, and personal life. Evidence has been found that the problem of poor listening skills exists at this site and there are several probable causes for this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the deficiency of listening skills of students at Sites A, B, and C, surveys of teachers, parents, and students, pre-test results, and anecdotal records will be presented. Teachers were surveyed at the three sites, from kindergarten through fourth grade.

Survey Results

At all sites, the teachers were given a survey (Appendix A). Those surveyed represented a variety of levels and experiences. At Site A, 29 surveys were distributed and 21 were returned. At Site B, 10 surveys were distributed and all were returned. At Site C, 25 surveys were distributed and 17 were returned. Results of the teacher survey are presented in Table 4. Of the teachers surveyed, 0% strongly agreed that their students listened well and followed directions well. A majority of teachers agree or strongly agree that they have to repeat directions. Approximately one-third of teachers do not incorporate listening instruction in their classrooms. Some of the instructional methods noted by teachers who do incorporate listening instruction were reminders (examples: "Eyes on me, no mouths moving when mine is", "Please listen closely", "Any questions?"), rather than direct instruction. In response to whether their students would

benefit from more listening instruction, 98% of the teachers stated yes. Teachers noted the following behaviors of non-listening students: daydreaming, playing in desk, drawing, reading, asking questions just asked, talking over the speaker, not having materials reading, and sharpening pencils. Based on the data and comments from teachers surveyed, it is clear that there is a deficiency of listening skills within a classroom setting.

Table 4

Results of Teacher Survey

Questions	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	Strongly Agree 4
Students listen well				
Site A	0%	53%	47%	0%
Site B	0%	10%	90%	0%
Site C	11%	35%	54%	0%
Total	4%	38%	58%	0%
Students follow oral directions well				
Site A	0%	53%	47%	0%
Site B	0%	30%	70%	0%
Site C	6%	65%	29%	0%
Total	2%	52%	46%	0%
I have to repeat oral directions				
Site A	0%	9%	82%	9%
Site B	0%	40%	50%	10%
Site C	0%	24%	53%	23%
Total	0%	21%	65%	14%
I currently incorporate listening instruction in the classroom				
Site A	29%			71%
Site B	20%			80%
Site C	35%			65%
Total	29%			71%

Parents surveyed were parents of third and fourth grade students (Appendix B). At Site A, 15 parent surveys were distributed and 14 were returned. At Site B, 20 parent surveys were distributed and 19 were returned. At Site C, 22 parent surveys were distributed and 19 were returned. Results of the parent survey are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Results from Initial Parent Survey

Questions	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	Strongly Agree 4
My child listens well				
Site A	0%	21%	50%	29%
Site B	0%	27%	62%	11%
Site C	0%	21%	63%	16%
Total	0%	23%	59%	18%
My child follows oral directions well				
Site A	0%	21%	43%	36%
Site B	0%	22%	72%	6%
Site C	0%	21%	58%	21%
Total	0%	21%	59%	20%
I have to repeat oral directions				
Site A	0%	79%	14%	7%
Site B	0%	61%	39%	0%
Site C	0%	79%	21%	0%
Total	0%	73%	25%	1%

In the parent survey, one-fourth of the respondents disagreed to the statement that my child listens well. Two-thirds somewhat agreed that their child listened well and followed directions. A majority of the parents sometimes have to repeat oral directions to their child. Parents were able to list many behaviors that their child exhibits when he/she does not listen, such as: pretending not to hear, staring, not completing task as asked, paying attention to another distraction, selective hearing, responding completely off the

topic, and walking away. Based on the data and comments from the parent survey, there is a deficiency in listening skills.

In contrast, based on the student survey, 93% of the 57 students believe that they listen good or awesome to their teachers (Appendix C). The complete results of this survey are found in Table 6.

Table 6

Results of Initial Student Survey

Questions	Bad	All Right	Good	Awesome
How well do you listen to your teachers?				
Site A	0%	0%	33%	67%
Site B	0%	10%	50%	40%
Site C	5%	5%	90%	0%
Total	2%	5%	61%	32%
How well do you listen to your parents?				
Site A	0%	13%	54%	33%
Site B	0%	30%	40%	30%
Site C	0%	18%	64%	18%
Total	0%	22%	53%	25%
How well do you listen to your friends?				
Site A	0%	0%	47%	53%
Site B	0%	5%	30%	65%
Site C	0%	5%	50%	45%
Total	0%	4%	43%	53%
How well do you follow directions?				
Site A	0%	13%	27%	60%
Site B	0%	10%	45%	45%
Site C	0%	18%	55%	27%
Total	0%	14%	44%	42%

The majority of the students feel that they follow directions good or awesome. Therefore, this illustrates the discrepancy between the students and their teacher's perception of the students' listening ability. Despite students' confidence in their listening ability, teachers and parents possess a different view of their ability and feel improvements should be made. A pretest was given to the students to gauge their ability to listen. However, the students were told at the inception of the activity that this activity was a listening pretest and therefore the students realized that good listening was required.

Listening Pretest

A listening pretest was administered to the third and fourth grade students (Appendix D). At Site A, 14 students were given the pretest, at Site B, 18 students were given the pretest, and at Site C, 22 students were given the pretest. For the pretest, students were given an 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet of white paper that had five empty circles on it. At the onset of the listening evaluation, the students were told that this was a listening pretest and the directions would only be stated once. This alerted the students of the importance of listening carefully. The teacher then gave oral directions of what should be drawn on or added to each circle. Most students did well because it was presented as a listening activity. They were extremely focused on the task. The majority of the errors that did occur were adding extra details, instead of omitting directions. For example, one of the directions required students to draw glasses on one of the circles. At Site A, 71% of students drew in eyes, at Site B, 40% of students drew in eyes and at Site C, 45% of the students drew in eyes. This verifies that students struggle to follow directions exactly even after being prompted that listening is crucial to successful completion of task. To

further verify deficiencies in student listening skills, the teachers at Sites A, B, and C kept anecdotal records.

Anecdotal Records

After keeping anecdotal records for two weeks prior to the interventions, some patterns emerged from all three sites. Records consisted of notes written when the teacher observed non-listening behaviors. The following behaviors appeared as the most prominent non-listening behaviors: not watching the speaker, playing with materials, and talking. About one-tenth of students consistently displayed the behaviors, while the others sporadically exhibited these behaviors. Based on the evidence collected and shown at all three Sites, there is a deficiency of listening skills to follow oral directions. There are many possible causes for this deficiency.

Probable Causes

The literature suggests several causes for deficiency in listening skills in the school setting. The main causes include lack of instruction, environmental issues, physical and psychological conditions of students.

Lack of Instruction

"Perhaps the most neglected areas of language arts are speaking and listening skills. Although school children spend about 58% of their time listening, only approximately 8% of instruction time is devoted to teaching listening skills" (Wolvin & Coakley as cited by Cramond, 1993, p. 44). Teachers have many curriculum requirements that must be met. By the time the main topics are taught, the only time left is taken up by special classes. Social skills, including listening, are often forgotten or pushed aside. "Teachers are often frustrated with students' lack of listening skills, but most find it

difficult to fit listening instruction into an already full day. Many never try it" (Brent & Anderson, 1993, p. 123). At the given sites, teacher surveys reflected parallel findings regarding listening instruction. Although 71% of the teachers claim to incorporate listening instruction into their lessons, their methods do not teach students how to listen. Numerous teachers use the phrase 'all eyes on me' to make sure the students are focusing. This does not ensure listening when the students are not aware of what they need to do to be good listeners. Other teachers have a rule of only giving directions once. This teaches the children that they need to listen, but not how to listen.

According to Jalongo (1995), "children devote more time to listening than to any other classroom activity. Yet, listening rarely finds its way into the language arts curriculum, much less into other subject areas" (p. 14). Educators often assume that students know how to listen. "Although teachers often emphasize the development of reading, writing, and speaking skills, they may neglect to teach students strategies for effective listening" (Brent & Anderson, 1993, p. 123).

The area of following oral directions is a component of listening that is vital to students' success. Many teachers continue to rely on giving directions orally. The problem with this practice is "...most children in typical classrooms have difficulty hearing and understanding their teachers at some point during the school day" (Anderson, 1997, p. 26). For those students whose primary learning modality is not auditory, teachers may not provide the extra instruction necessary to help the children succeed.

Teachers are not aware of how to improve their students' abilities to follow directions. Often, "Students appear to be confused or are not able to follow directions and instructions in classroom activities" states Omaha public schools (1997, p. 1).

Teachers try to solve this confusion by repeating directions, which adds to the problem. Students are not held accountable for following directions given. For example, when given an oral direction to open a book to a specific page number, students cannot discern which book to use and then cannot recall which page to turn to. Instead of remediating the problem, teachers contribute to the problem by repeating the page number. In other words, teachers are expecting students to listen the first time, yet are enabling this pattern to continue.

> Bygrave (1994) states the following regarding listening instruction:
>
> The proficient use of listening skills by children is essential for their success in the school setting, not only for their learning in the classroom but also in their communication and social interactions with others. Studies have shown that children spend a large proportion of their time at school listening (Divine, 1978; Floyd, 1985; Wilt, 1950), but the teaching of listening skills as part of the school curriculum largely is ignored. Many educators assume listening skills just happen, and their acquisition often is taken for granted. (p. 51)

In addition to lack of instruction, there are environmental issues within the classroom that inhibit the ability of students to listen and follow directions.

Environmental Issues

Environmental issues within the classroom can negatively impact students' listening capabilities. Room design and noise level are the key factors which impede students' listening. Many teachers use teaching methods which require students' desks to be grouped allowing for communication between students at any given time. Most schools, however, were not designed to accommodate this type of interaction.

Anderson (1997) suggests that the changes in teaching methods contradict the current design of classrooms in many schools:

> Booming enrollments and the much publicized sorry state of school buildings are leading many school districts to build and renovate again after years of inactivity. Unfortunately, however, many classrooms being designed today are a duplication of acoustically inadequate 50-year-old designs. Back then, schools were designed for teachers lecturing to straight rows of quiet, attentive students. They were not designed for group learning, hands-on science, or math manipulatives. And, significantly, they were designed before we acquired scientific knowledge about children's speech perception and its link to learning difficulties. (pp. 26-27)

Anderson (1997) continues to describe how reverberation can act as a deterrent to students' understanding of the spoken language. "The amount of reverberation is determined by the size of the room and how much acoustically absorbent material (carpeting, draperies, treated ceiling tile) covers the surfaces" (Anderson, 1997, p. 27). Reverberation can lead to an increase in noise level. Schnell (1995) states excess classroom noise deters students from listening effectively for the given message.

At Sites A, B, and C, the schools were all built approximately 40 years ago. At that time the most widely used teaching method was lecture, or teacher centered. There is also a lack of sound absorbing materials, such as carpeting, drapes, and cork bulletin boards at Sites A and B.

Age can also be a determinant in listening ability. "A listener may be able to understand a speaker who is speaking at a normal conversational level in a quiet room. But the same listener, especially a young child, probably will not be able to understand

the speaker when noise from the ventilation system, overhead projector, or children's voices are introduced" (Anderson, 1997, p. 27). The negative impact that classroom noise levels can have on students is even greater when compounded with certain physical conditions of students.

Physical Conditions of Students

"Conditions affecting the child physically, such as fatigue, abuse, hunger, illness, bathroom needs, or room temperature, can interfere with listening" (Jalongo, 1996, p. 22). Although some of these conditions can not be controlled by the teacher, they need to be taken into consideration during instructional time.

Fatigue can impact students' ability to listen actively. Many children begin the day wide-awake, but begin to fade after lunch. Others feel tired in the morning if awakened too early or without enough sleep. Parents were asked how many hours of sleep their child usually gets each school night. Of the 51 parents that responded, 45 responded that their children received 9 or more hours of sleep each night. Students were also asked if they felt tired at school. Twenty-six percent of students surveyed said that they always felt tired and school, and 65% of the students stated that they sometimes felt tired and school. Therefore, a total of 91% of students are tired at least some of the time at school when listening is essential.

Hunger is another factor that teachers have noted as having an affect on listening. Some students do not eat breakfast in the morning as reported in the parent survey. Seven out of the 50 parents responded that their child only ate breakfast most days. As the clock nears lunchtime, students may have difficulty focusing on subject matter at

hand. On the teacher survey, 64% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that prior to lunch, hunger restricts concentration levels in their students.

Illnesses that students possess may have negative impacts on listening capability. "Many students have more severe problems understanding the spoken word: children with hearing loss because of colds, ear infections, or allergies; …those with hearing loss in one ear; and those who hear but do not understand speech when there is competing noise" (Anderson, 1997, p. 27). Results from the parent survey show that one sixth of the students suffer from one or more ear infections each year.

Younger students have a unique obstacle to overcome in order to listen well. A 1982 study examined the loudness required for people of varying ages to hear the spoken word at 100% accuracy. Adults needed sound pressure level (SPL) of 11 decibels, ten-year-olds needed 18 decibels SPL, five-year-olds needed 25 decibels SPL, and three-year-olds needed 38 decibels SPL. "The study revealed that young children require the spoken word to be significantly louder than adults before they can clearly recognize and understand words" (Anderson, 1997, p. 27). In addition to physical conditions, the psychological state of students can affect their ability to listen and follow directions well.

Psychological Factors

"Psychological conditions, such as mental health, intellectual ability, attention span, ability to focus, language proficiency, interest in the message, perceptions of the speaker, ability to process information at the speaker's rate, and self-esteem as a listener/learner, all exert an influence (Garman & Garman, as cited in Jalongo, 1996, p.22). These conditions, although they may be hard to detect, have a real affect on students' ability to focus on a spoken message.

"Mental listening distractions occur when we have too much intrapersonal communication while engaged in interpersonal communication. The intrapersonal communication that was previously mentioned is normal but too much inner reflection, or daydreaming, can greatly inhibit listener understanding" (Schnell, 1995, p. 5). Children can have trouble focusing when they are worried about home life, safety, or other concerns.

If students are not interested in a topic, they will not put forth the effort to listen effectively. "Motivation depends upon the relevance of the listening and the child's willingness to focus on the task at hand. . . .Children are more motivated to listen when they know they are expected to perform a specific, interesting task" (Jalongo, 1995, p. 13).

Students perceive messages based on emotional connections to the speaker or subject. "When students add a noticeably positive or negative emotional component to messages they hear, it tends to bias their interpretations one way or the other. Such an emotional response pattern serves as a primary barrier to effective listening (Glenn & Pood, as cited in Pearce 1995, p. 31).

There are many causes for deficiencies in listening and following directions. Extensive research supports this, as well as classroom observations. After evaluating possible causes, research provides possible solutions to reduce the occurrence of this common phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The problems in listening and following directions can be diminished with the aid of direct instruction of active listening, controlling the classroom environment, and evaluating the physical conditions of the students. The experts seem to agree that these are factors that will improve students' listening abilities (Brent & Anderson, 1993; Jalongo, 1996).

Physical Conditions

The physical condition of the students should be evaluated to determine if any health related issues are impairing their listening ability. Jalongo (1996) recommends that children have hearing and health screenings (in school) to ensure that they are physically capable of being active listeners. Teachers need to be aware of students who may not have enough to eat. By arranging for a child to be part of the free breakfast/lunch program, it will improve the child's ability to focus on what is being said in the classroom (Jalongo, 1996). Based on her experiences, Sally Burnett, an experienced elementary teacher, explains the importance of a snack break to allow the students focus on a given task instead of an empty stomach. She also advises taking scheduled bathroom breaks. This provides the students an opportunity to refresh stagnant

minds. Although physical conditions of the students are important, the environment of the classroom is a critical factor in active listening.

Classroom Environment

Environment plays a critical role in the ability of students to listen effectively. Noise level within the classroom impacts how well a student hears a given message. Jalongo (1996) suggests practical ideas for teachers, such as providing a quiet place for students to go. For example, a reading corner can be a quiet area for students. Also, students can utilize a specially located work area if they need a quieter environment to work in. A successful method of controlling the noise level in the classroom is to use a stoplight poster. When the light is red, the students are not to talk and work independently. In contrast, when the light is green, the students are able to talk within their cooperative groups. Anderson (1997) describes other areas in the school where the noise level could be decreased. For example, using acoustic tiles and carpeting in noisy areas will cut down on extraneous noise. Unfortunately, teachers are unable to totally control classroom environment.

By working together, both the teacher and students create a positive listening environment plan. The purpose of this plan is to make students aware of the environmental factors that impact their listening. This sets the stage for listening. "Conscientious efforts should be made to get children ready to listen. A listening atmosphere does not happen incidentally. Such factors as terminating prior activities, eliminating distractions, setting a definite purpose for listening, allowing flexible seating arrangements, and identifying potential follow-up activities create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to listening" (Funk & Funk, 1989, p.661). The focus of

this plan is to find reasonable ways to reduce outside distractions. To create a positive listening environment plan, students should brainstorm ideas, choose realistic options, and create a classroom poster to refer to during class periods. Another way teachers can control the classroom environment using direct instruction in their classroom.

Direct Instruction

"Children do not need to listen more, they need to listen better" (Winn, 1988, p. 144). This requires direct instruction of active listening. Direct instruction entails lessons designed to specifically teach and model the skills necessary for active listening. Active listening, listening for a purpose, is required when a listener needs to completely understand an intended message (Schnell, 1995). If listening skills are to be acquired, the skills must be taught. Hyslop and Tone agree that while engaging students in active listening training, the activities should be structured (as cited in Pearce, 1995). Some examples of structured activities are role playing, discussing how emotions affect listening, and interviewing other students about relevant curricular topics. These structured activities would teach only one active listening skill at a time without interference of new curriculum.

A recent trend in education is to use a whole language approach, which is including language in all subject areas. Due to the extensive use of whole language instruction, more students will benefit from deliberate training in active listening (Brent & Anderson, 1993). Whole language is a successful across the curriculum method as it integrates subjects. This method is successful because the students must combine what they learn from different lessons. For example, teaching a unit on space would include writing reports (language arts), calculating distances (mathematics), researching planet

characteristics (science), and studying the history of space exploration (social studies). The students must learn how to listen effectively, because the subjects are not separate entities. Each subject relies on the others to more effectively teach a unit. So, each lesson acts as a building block for the next lesson. To fully learn what is expected of them, students need to listen well and retain the previous lessons. In order to fully benefit from whole language, the students must be taught how to listen actively.

The development of specific listening strategies is imperative to improve active listening skills. Some of the strategies that Brent and Anderson (1993) suggest are watching the speaker, focusing on what is said, predicting what may happen next, summarizing information, and formulating questions to verify what was heard.

Watching the speaker. Watching the speaker is an important element of active listening because it allows the listener to focus on the verbal message in addition to observing nonverbal cues displayed by the speaker (Edwards, 1991). Students must realize that the speaker, teacher or another student, has an important message to tell. Watching the speaker is a skill that enables a listener to gain insight into the speaker's message. To increase active listening, children should be taught to focus on the speaker's non-verbal cues, which are body language, gestures, speaker attitude, and emotional tone (Edwards, 1991). A method to teach this technique is the teacher modeling the behavior and the students practicing the behavior. Many times during instructional time, students may daydream. To avoid daydreaming, students need to learn to keep their eyes moving and avoid staring. The teacher should model how non-verbal cues can vary the meaning of a message (Leverentz & Garman, 1987). For example, teachers should model positive body language by leaning in towards the speaker, smiling at the speaker, and nodding

approvingly. This will demonstrate to the students what positive non-verbal cues look like. Also, teachers can role-play the nonverbal cues that speakers with negative messages may convey. For example, the teacher can demonstrate negative behaviors, such as folded arms, harsh tones while speaking, and lack of eye contact. This will provide a non-threatening environment for the students to observe certain negative nonverbal cues. Watching the speaker will allow the students to begin focusing on the speaker's message.

Focusing. Focusing is an important skill for children to acquire. When instructors direct their students as to what to listen for prior to the lesson, then the children will be able to focus their attention on the important information (Jalongo, 1996). For example, during a math lesson, discuss pertinent math terms before and after instruction. This tells the students what they are expected to retain from the lesson. Also, teachers should make the directions concise for easier understanding on the part of the students (Jalongo, 1995). When instructions are simplified, students can quickly comprehend the message and start the activity. Funk & Funk (1989) explain:

> Perhaps providing a purpose for listening is the single most important responsibility of the classroom teacher and one of the most neglected. Children should be given specific purpose for each listening experience and every effort should be made to make sure they understand what is called for: listening for main idea, identifying supporting details, detecting moods, differentiating fact from fiction, selecting descriptive vocabulary, etc... They should not be asked to listen to an oral presentation but should be directed what to listen for, a distinction that is critical in teaching listening. (p. 660)

In addition to providing a purpose, students can be taught to ignore distractions. This will also improve the students' ability to focus during a lesson. Role playing good examples and bad examples of ignoring distractions is a way to practice the technique. The ability to focus will permit the students to begin making predictions about what will be stated next.

Prediction. Prediction is a common tool that encourages the listener to evaluate the message and determine possible connections to past experiences. Nichols, as cited by DeBruyn (1999), suggests "predicting the speaker's next point. If you guess right, that point comes to your mind twice; if you guess wrong, you immediately compare your guess with the point made and learn by contrast and comparison" (p. 1). Using read alouds is another prediction strategy that can be used to develop active listening skills. This practice involves the teacher reading a story aloud to the class for enjoyment. Read alouds provide opportunities for students to predict and summarize. Before reading a story, students should make predictions based on the title and illustrations. This encourages them to focus while listening in order to determine if their predictions were correct (Brent & Anderson, 1993). Another component of read alouds as suggested by Barhydt (1987) is using a technique called "interrupted reading." The instructor stops reading in the middle of a story to ask questions, engaging the students' imaginations and attentions spans. This exercise keeps the students' focus on listening to the story by predicting what may happen next and summarizing what has already occurred.

Summarization. Another strategy, summarizing information, improves retention of the intended message. "Periodically summarize the speaker's remarks to yourself. This action doubles your ability to understand and retain content" (DeBruyn, 1999, p. 1).

An activity called "Think-Pair-Share" requires students to interview a partner, remember their partner's response, and share that information with another pair (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Summarizing the speaker's message would greatly improve students' ability to identify the important components of a message in any given situation throughout their lives. The act of summarizing the speaker's message will naturally lead to asking questions about unclear portions of the message.

Formulating questions. Formulating questions helps to clarify that the listener is receiving the speaker's intended message. This strategy reduces the risk of miscommunication. A method of developing this questioning technique is to use interviewing during active listening instruction. For example, students may conduct formal interviews with grandparents about their childhood. This activity requires the students to formulate questions and use active listening to gain knowledge. Cramond (1992) states, "One way for children to get the information that they need is through interviewing. Students who are proficient at interviewing refine their questioning and listening skills and learn that all valuable information is not written"(p. 46). Spagnoli (1995) provides a Vietnamese saying which supports Cramond' s belief: "What is carved on rocks will wear away in time, what is told from mouth to mouth will live forever" (p. 15). Interviewing helps students to hone their listening skills, while also allowing for students to build interpersonal relationships (Kreis, 1996).

There are two specific interviewing activities that require students to discuss issues and listen attentively to the opinions of others. "He Said, She Said", a debate between two people, incorporates discussion of a controversial topic and requires active listening of each participant (Gano, 1998). The listener is required to repeat what was

heard to be verified by the speaker. Another use of the strategy "Think-Pair-Share" is an activity that allows for active listening in both small and large group settings (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). This lesson involves partners brainstorming and then joining another pair to share what ideas they have generated. This can be done at any time during a lesson to help students gain knowledge. To teach these strategies, a teacher will model the activity with a student in front of the class. This helps the students to visualize what is expected of them. Watching the speaker, focusing, predicting, summarizing, and formulating questions are all skills needed in cooperative learning.

Cooperative Learning

A useful technique for students to practice listening is cooperative learning in the classroom. This strategy requires the students to work interdependently, relying and listening to each other, in order to be successful. There are numerous methods to form cooperative groups. A few are according to the ability of the students, the individual interests of the children, and random placement. Within a cooperative learning group, each child has a job. Each job is vital to the success of the group (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Examples of jobs are materials manager, recorder, speaker, and timekeeper. For example, during a science experiment, each person relies on each other to for the experiment to be successful. Only by listening to each other and working together, the group will make the most of the learning experience.

Listening is an important social skill, which cooperative learning encourages. Working together more often requires students to listen to each other more and to the teacher less (Funk & Funk, 1989). In the BUILD acronym, components for successful cooperative groups are listed. The D represents developing social skills, which include

active listening (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Cooperative learning helps teach social skills effectively, which in turn improves listening ability among students. Children do not automatically acquire social skills needed to work in groups. "Social skills do not develop for the class as a whole without deliberate, specific and repeated attention to them (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p. 50). The skills must be taught using direct instruction prior to the cooperative learning lesson (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Both during the lesson and after, students must be reminded and encouraged to display the social skill of the lesson. To strengthen cooperative learning lessons, social skills must be practiced daily.

Practice Strategies

Bygrave (1994) believes an effective strategy is to incorporate activities for the development of listening skills into daily lessons. After direct instruction, the students must practice the newly learned listening skills. "To ensure that active, purposive listening becomes an integral part of the learning process, teachers should plan carefully to encourage active listening. Plans should include experiences where children are required to listen not only to the teacher but also each other" (Swafford & Paulos, 1993, p. 402). To practice listening to peers, effective strategies are interviewing (see Formulating Questions), discussion groups, and peer conferencing. In discussion groups students are required to listen to other students and respond appropriately. Peer conferencing is similar to discussion groups, except it occurs in groups of two or three students. The students respond to each other's written work and ideas. Practicing listening skills daily is more effective when interesting lessons are used.

Using Interesting Lessons

Finally, perhaps the most obvious strategy to an educator is to develop interesting lessons. Incorporating interesting lessons that grab the students' attention motivates them to focus on the intended message. Jalongo (1995) suggests beginning lessons with attention grabbing activities that require the students to listen actively in order to succeed. For example, teachers may begin a lesson with a surprising anecdote that would hint at the upcoming lesson. Also, beginning a science lesson with an experiment would increase students' interest to ask why the reaction occurred. The experience is more real to the students than listening to a lecture. When students are grabbed and interested in a topic, students are more likely to listen. If teachers are able to put information into an entertaining story form, students would be more likely to listen attentively (Leal, 1993).

Using the multiple intelligences is an effective way to create lessons that interest students. There are nine multiple intelligences- verbal/linguistic (read and write), mathematical/logical (problem solving), visual/spatial (drawing), auditory (listening), kinesthetic (move body, use manipulatives), musical/rhythmic (sing a song), interpersonal (learn with others), intrapersonal (learn independently), and natural (based on nature). Each student has strength in certain intelligences. By varying the intelligences or including more than one intelligence in lessons, more students will be apt to succeed (Lazear, 1999). For example, using lessons that incorporate kinesthetic activities such as acting out how the atoms of a liquid, gas, and solids move, students will better understand the concept. Using music to teach the states and capitals helps students put the knowledge into long term memory. When the students are more interested in a lesson, they will automatically listen more attentively (Leal, 1993).

The above strategies are possible solutions to the problem of poor active listening skills. These strategies were taken into consideration in the development of the proposed project objectives. Based on the fact that the involved students have not received direct active listening instruction, the primary focus of the interventions is to provide direct instruction of active listening skills.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of teaching active listening through direct instruction, cooperative learning, and improved listening environment, during September, 1999 to December, 1999, the third grade targeted classes will increase active listening skills and ability to follow oral directions. This will be measured by teacher and student surveys, student journal entries, and teacher checklists.

In order to accomplish the targeted objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Development and implementation of tools and procedures that promote active listening skills and the ability to follow directions.
2. Creating activities using cooperative learning that will foster positive listening skills.
3. Establish an environment that is more conducive to listening.

Project Action Plan

I. Weeks 1-2 (Minutes are over the weekly period)

A. Define Listening & Discuss Why it is Important- 10 min.

B. Steps to Listening

1. Model listening behavior- ongoing

2. Role play-30 min.

a. good listening

b. bad listening

C. Create Positive Listening Environment Plan

1. Brainstorm ideas- 10 min.

2. Choose realistic options- 5 min.

3. Create classroom posters describing plan- 30 min.

D. Put tennis balls on chairs and desks- 15 min.

E. Assessments

1. Teacher surveys

2. Parent surveys

3. Student surveys- 5 min.

4. Pre-test- 15 min.

5. Initial teacher checklist

II. Weeks 3-4

A. Distractions

1. Identify- 10 min.

2. Brainstorm ways to ignore- 10 min.

3. Role playing- ignore distractions-30 min.

(divide class in half)

B. Assessments

1. Student journal entry- How was your ability to listen impacted by distractions? 10 min.

2. Teacher checklist

III. Weeks 5-7

A. Active Listening Instruction

1. Questioning strategies- 60 min. (two days)

2. How to read body language- 20-min.

3. Interview peer- curriculum related (think-pair-share)- 20 min.

B. Assessments

1. Student journal- How did active listening help you report on the interview? 10 min.

2. Teacher checklist

IV. Weeks 8-10

A. Individual Listening Activities

1. Following directions- drawing activities

2. Following directions-kinesthetic activities

3. Listening to music/drawing activity

4. Read aloud story mapping

B. Assessments

1. Student drawings/mapping

2. Teacher checklist

V Weeks 11-12

A. Cooperative Learning Activities

1. Pair drawing

2. Curriculum-based group activities- listening is social skill

B. Post Assessments

1. Parent survey

2. Student survey

3. Final teacher checklist

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of these interventions, students will take pre and post tests, write journal entries, and complete a student survey. Parents and teachers will each complete a survey. Researchers will assess by using a following directions checklist. This assessment plan will be used for pre and post data collection.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase students' ability to listen and follow oral directions. Direct instruction of a listening curriculum was implemented to effect the desired change.

All three researchers began new teaching positions at the start of data collection. The action plan was devised prior to these changes. Originally, each site was to place tennis balls on the feet of classroom chairs to reduce excess noise. None of the sites placed tennis balls on the chair feet as planned. Site A began the year with carpet, however it was removed during the implementation. In addition, the chairs' design was not conducive to putting tennis balls on the bottom. Site C had carpeting in the classroom, and therefore did not require the tennis balls. Since neither Site A nor C required the use of tennis balls, it was decided that Site B would not use the tennis balls to keep consistency.

Prior to any listening instruction, several listening surveys were distributed. The teachers at the three sites completed a survey about students' listening within the classroom. The students were given a survey to assess their own ability to listen to teachers, parents, and peers. Parents of the targeted students completed surveys about

their child's listening abilities at home. A listening skills pretest was given to determine how well the students listened to oral directions.

Instructional emphasis was placed on teaching skills and strategies on active listening. In order to reinforce these skills, direct instruction was used over a 12-week period. At the onset of the implementation, listening was defined and its importance was discussed. Appropriate listening behavior was modeled on an ongoing basis. The students also role-played examples of good listening and bad listening. A positive listening environment was created by first brainstorming ideas. Next, these ideas were evaluated to determine realistic options. Finally, a classroom poster was created to describe the plan. This poster was prominently displayed in the classroom.

Listening instruction continued with identifying distractions within the classroom. The students brainstormed ways to ignore distractions. These strategies were then used to role-play possible methods to ignore distractions. Following this activity, students wrote a journal entry about how their ability to listen was impacted by distractions.

Active listening instruction continued through the use of questioning strategies, interpreting body language, and interviewing peers. At the conclusion of the interview, students completed a journal entry about how active listening helped them report on the interview.

Individual listening activities were developed by each researcher based on the site's curriculum needs. These included following directions activities that incorporated both drawing and kinesthetic activities. The students' drawings were used as assessments. The read aloud story mapping was not completed due to time constraints.

In the original action plan, an initial teacher checklist was planned. Some behaviors were too difficult to categorize, so the checklist was replace by anecdotal records. These records were used to provide evidence of the problem. Since the teacher checklist was not developed, it was not used during data collection.

In the final weeks of data collection, cooperative learning activities were used as an opportunity for the students to practice their listening skills and strategies. Curriculum based activities were used.

Post assessments were used to determine growth of students' listening abilities. These assessments consisted of surveys that were completed by both parents and students, as well as listening post-tests. Based on the data collected, researchers completed an analysis of the results.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Several assessment measures were used to determine the growth of students' listening skills. The parents answered surveys prior to and at the conclusion of the intervention. Each student in the targeted classrooms also completed two surveys. To measure the knowledge that the students gained, the students took a pre and post listening test. Journal entries were completed by the students, which showed the increase of their awareness of active listening.

Post Parent Survey

In order to assess the effects of active listening instruction, the parents at each site completed a post survey, explaining their child's current listening abilities (Appendix F). The post survey asks the parents to document any growth their child has exhibited in their listening skills. At Site A, 15 parent surveys were distributed and 9 were returned.

At Site B, 21 parent surveys were distributed and 9 were returned. At Site C, 22 parent surveys were distributed and 20 were returned. The results of the final survey are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Results from Post Parent Survey

Questions	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	Strongly Agree 4
My child listens better than beginning of the year				
Site A	0%	22%	56%	22%
Site B	0%	22%	78%	0%
Site C	10%	20%	60%	10%
Total	3%	21%	65%	11%
My child follows oral directions better than beginning of the year				
Site A	11%	33%	44%	11%
Site B	0%	0%	100%	0%
Site C	15%	15%	55%	15%
Total	9%	16%	66%	9%
I have to repeat oral directions				
Site A	11%	56%	33%	0%
Site B	0%	44%	56%	0%
Site C	5%	60%	35%	0%
Total	5%	54%	41%	0%
My child's listening skills have improved				
Site A	22%			78%
Site B	22%			78%
Site C	20%			80%
Total	21%			79%

Seventy-six percent of the responding parents felt that their child listens better than at the start of the year. Some parents commented that their child had not improved, as they were already good listeners at the beginning of the listening instruction. This

question was worded differently on the initial parent survey. Therefore, direct comparisons can not be made.

Similarly, the question regarding following oral directions also was stated differently than the original survey. However, parents responded on the improvement their child has made. Three-fourths of the students showed improvement in this area.

In Table 7, the majority of parents disagreed with the statement that they have to repeat oral directions. Five percent of the parents strongly disagreed to the statement. Prior to instruction, three-fourths of the parents did not feel that they needed to repeat directions. This does not show substantial improvement with all students, although it appears that a small percentage of the students have been able to focus on oral directions at home. Despite the need to repeat oral directions at home, 79% of parents felt that their child's listening ability has improved since the inception of the interventions. In comparison, the student surveys did not show an increase in their perceived listening ability.

Post Student Survey

At the conclusion of the intervention, the students completed a survey to self-assess their listening skills (Appendix C). Prior to any listening instruction, the students had completed the same survey. The results of these two surveys are compared in Table 8.

After learning proper listening skills, the students were more realistic in their responses on the final survey. This explains the change in how well the students felt they listened to the teacher. In the Good and Awesome categories, 93% of the students responded on the pre-survey and 89% on the post survey. The responses are fairly

consistent throughout the sites. The results from listening to friends question displayed no substantial difference as well. When asked about following directions their responses were similar to the results from the initial survey. This is further evidence that the students began to be more realistic with their understanding of the complexities of listening.

Table 8

Results of Initial/Final Student Survey

Questions	Bad Pre / Post	All Right Pre / Post	Good Pre / Post	Awesome Pre / Post
How well do you listen to your teachers?				
Site A	0% / 0%	0% / 0%	33% / 58%	67% / 42%
Site B	0% / 0%	10% / 15%	50% / 55%	40% / 30%
Site C	5% / 0%	5% / 18%	90% / 55%	0% / 27%
Total	2% / 0%	5% / 11%	61% / 56%	32% / 33%
How well do you listen to your parents?				
Site A	0% / 0%	13% / 17%	54% / 50%	33% / 33%
Site B	0% / 0%	30% / 35%	40% / 60%	30% / 5%
Site C	0% / 4%	18% / 9%	64% / 73%	18% / 14%
Total	0% / 1%	22% / 20%	53% / 62%	25% / 17%
How well do you listen to your friends?				
Site A	0% / 0%	0% / 0%	47% / 50%	53% / 50%
Site B	0% / 0%	5% / 25%	30% / 25%	65% / 50%
Site C	0% / 0%	5% / 9%	50% / 36%	45% / 55%
Total	0% / 0%	4% / 11 %	43% / 37%	53% / 52%
How well do you follow directions?				
Site A	0% / 0%	13% / 0%	27% / 42%	60% / 58%
Site B	0% / 0%	10% / 20%	45% / 55%	45% / 25%
Site C	0% / 0%	18% / 18%	55% / 50%	27% / 32%
Total	0% / 0%	14% / 13%	44% / 49%	42% / 38%

Responses to how well students listened to their parents improved a minute amount. Seventy-nine percent of the students felt they are "good" or "awesome" at

listening to their parents. Similarly, the percentage of parents who responded that their child listens well was equal to the student responses. The pre/post test also showed slight improvement of the students' listening abilities.

Pre/Post Test

The students took pre and post listening skills tests (Appendices D and E). This data was collected prior to and in conclusion of the listening instruction. The results of the tests were compared by the average number of correct answers the students gave. Results are given in Table 9.

Table 9

Comparison of Pre/Post Test

Sites	Pretest	Post-test
Site A	96%	97%
Site B	93%	96%
Site C	97%	97%
Totals	95%	97%

Improvement in listening ability was shown at all three sites. Site B showed the greatest improvement at 3%. Improvement was shown at Site A, which increased 1%. Site A demonstrated a low percentage of growth; however, the population of this class is all gifted students, who overall were excellent listeners prior to instruction. Site C showed no growth at all. The comparison did not show any growth, due to the novelty of the task. The novelty of the activity increased the students' motivation to listen well. In addition, the students were prompted that they were to listen to directions carefully in

order to succeed. The students were able to reflect in their journals upon the listening strategies used during the post-test.

Journals

Evidence of metacognition was displayed through student journals. When asked to reflect on any changes in their listening ability, students gave examples of active listening skills. For example, a third grade student responded, "What helped me remember was eye contact when he was talking, standing still, and paying attention." Another third grade student wrote, "The strategies that helped me were keeping eye contact, staying still, and thinking about what they said." One other example was from a fourth grade student who commented, "I think I am a good listener because when someone is talking I am not talking and I am using eye to eye contact." These student reflections show growth of their active listening skills. This slight growth indicates the value of listening instruction in the classroom.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on active listening skills, significant growth was not evident. However, teachers and parents both observed improvement of the students' listening abilities since the start of the intervention. Students have become more aware of the steps of active listening. In addition, students learned to identify potential distractions and methods to avoid them. The most substantial change that the students made was their heightened awareness of the complexity of listening.

The development of a listening program is vital in all classrooms in order for the students to learn to become successful listeners. Teachers expect students to be good

listeners, yet are not providing the students with the necessary instruction. One strength of this program is that it is a good start to helping the students become better listeners. This plan can easily be incorporated into any curriculum, in any district, at any age level. Components of the plan, role-playing and interviewing, are very engaging activities that the students enjoy. This helps to motivate the students to become better listeners. Journal entries allowed for increased metacognition for the students. The responses encouraged the students to think and reflect on their own listening, as well as their personal progress. Due to detailed instruction in listening skills, the students realized that listening is more complex than they initially thought.

For a more effective listening program, listening instruction needs to begin when children enter school. In order for this program to be more successful, instruction needs to begin as soon as students begin formal education. Teachers at all grade levels need to include listening instruction. Listening should be discussed and taught on a daily basis. In the intervention, a weakness is that it was difficult to consistently incorporate direct listening instruction into the daily schedule. Curriculum demands and other issues often require the majority of the school day. Listening needs to become a priority for the teacher, school, and parents in order for its importance to become evident to the students.

An area for modification would be to include more parental involvement. This can be accomplished by conducting a parent workshop at the onset of their child's educational career. Parents need to be provided with strategies to help their child become a better listener. The development of listening activities to be done at home to reinforce the skills learned at school will help the parents become active participants in the learning process.

Another difficulty in listening instruction is the inability to quantify improvements in listening. It would be very helpful to develop detailed checklists to be used throughout the instructional period. These checklists could be used to determine growth and which skills still need additional instruction. This intervention plan lacked adequate tools to quantify listening growth.

Listening curriculum should be adopted by all school districts. As schools become more focused on cooperative learning, listening becomes even more crucial. This plan will provide students with the tools that are needed for success in school and beyond.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY

Listening Survey

Please take the time to complete this survey about students' listening within the classroom. Return to Amy Winiecki's mailbox. Thank you!

1. In general, I feel my students listen well.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

2. In general, I feel my students follow oral directions well.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

3. How often do you have to repeat oral directions?

Never Sometimes Often Always

4. What behaviors do your students exhibit which let you know that they are not listening?

5. Do you currently incorporate listening instruction in your classroom?

Yes No

If yes, please explain what methods you use to instruct listening.

APPENDIX B

INITIAL PARENT SURVEY

Listening Survey

Please take the time to complete this survey about your child's listening. Thank you!

1. In general, I feel my child listens well.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

2. In general, I feel my child follows oral directions well.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

3. How often do you have to repeat oral directions to your child?

Never Sometimes Often Always

4. What behaviors does your child exhibit that demonstrate he/she is not listening?

5. Do you currently discuss listening strategies with your child?

Yes No

If yes, please explain what strategies you discuss.

6. How many ear infections does your child get each year?

0 1-2 3-4 5 or more

7. How often does your child eat breakfast?

Always Most days Never

8. On average, how many hours of sleep does your child get each night?

6 or less 7 8 9 10 or more

APPENDIX C

STUDENT SURVEY

Listening Survey

Please circle the answer to each question. Please be honest.

1. How well do you listen to your teachers?

   Bad Alright Good Awesome

2. How well do you listen to your parents?

   Bad Alright Good Awesome

3. How well do you listen to your friends?

   Bad Alright Good Awesome

4. How well do you think you follow directions?

   Bad Alright Good Awesome

5. Do you feel tired at school?

   Always Sometimes Never

APPENDIX D

PRETEST

Listening Pretest
Funny Faces

This test will be given during the first two weeks of school. The students will be supplied with the attached sheet with five circles; they will need to provide their own pencil. Directions will be given orally and the students will have folders standing up on their desks to provide barriers between their papers and the other students'. The teacher will not repeat directions. There will be ample time given between directions for the students to complete the directions.

1. We are going to do an activity in which you will need to listen to what I say. I will give you directions that you will need to follow. I will not repeat the directions, so you will need to listen well the first time.

2. Turn your paper so it is short and wide.

3. You should see three circles across with one on top of the middle circle and one below the middle circle.

4. The middle circle is a girl's face. Give the girl two eyes and one nose.

5. Now the girl has curly hair and is smiling. Draw her curly hair and smile.

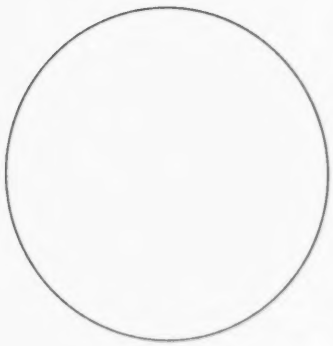
6. The circle to the right of the girl is an animal. The animal has pointed ears. The animal also has whiskers coming out of its nose. Draw two pointed ears and whiskers coming out of its nose.

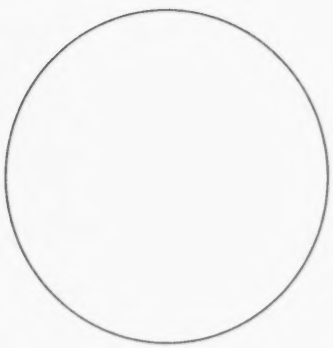
7. The bottom circle is the girl's grandma. She is not happy. Give the grandma a frown. Also, she is wearing glasses. Draw her glasses.

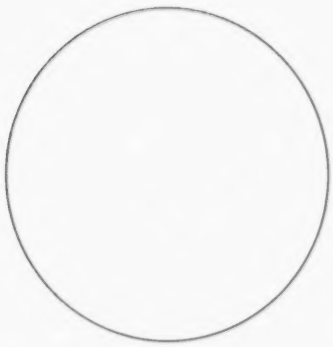
8. The top circle is the sun. It is sending rays of light to touch the girl's hair. Draw lines that look like the sun's rays that touch the girl's hair.

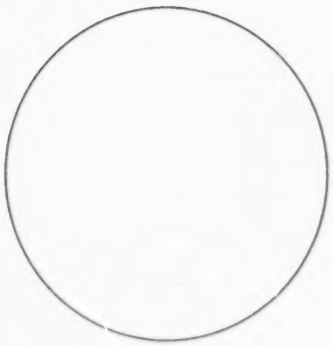
9. The grandma is wearing a hat. Her hat has a flower on it. Draw her hat with a flower on it.

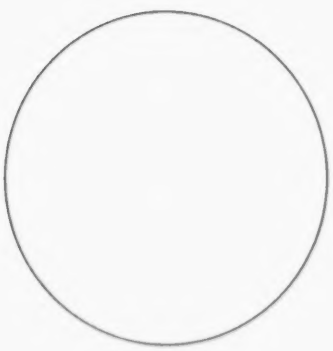
10. Turn your paper over and print your first and last name in all capital letters.











APPENDIX E

POST-TEST

Listening Post-Test

Funny Faces

This test will be given during the last two weeks of the data collection period. The students will be supplied with the attached sheet with five circles; they will need to provide their own pencil. Directions will be given orally and the students will have folders standing up on their desks to provide barriers between their papers and the other students' papers. The teacher will not repeat directions. There will be ample time given between directions for the students to complete the directions.

1. We are going to do an activity in which you will need to listen to what I say. I will give you direction that you will need to follow. This activity is similar to one that we did earlier in the year, but the directions will be different. I will not repeat directions, so you will need to listen well the first time.

2. Turn your paper so that it is tall, like how you write on notebook paper.

3. You should see three circles across the middle with one on top of the middle circle and one below the middle circle.

4. The bottom circle is a boy. He has two eyes, a nose and a smile. Please draw his eyes, nose and smile where they belong on his face.

5. The boy also has freckles on his cheeks, give him five freckles on each cheek.

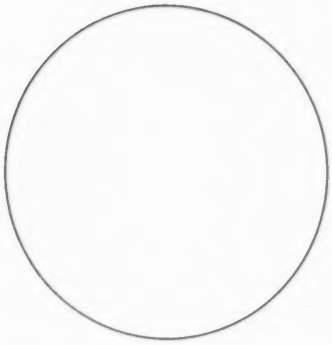
6. The circles above him to the left and to the right are balloons. Please draw strings from his head to his balloons.

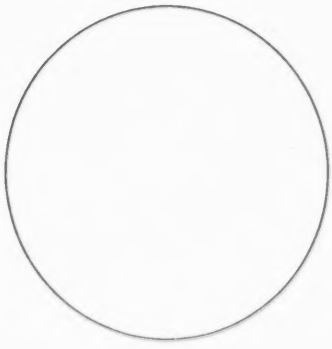
7. The balloon on the left is white, the balloon on the right is gray, color it in with your pencil.

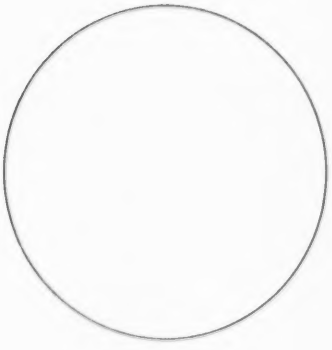
8. The top balloon is the boys' mom. She is happy. Please draw a smile on her face. She is from outer space and has two antennae coming out of the top of her head. Draw her antennae.

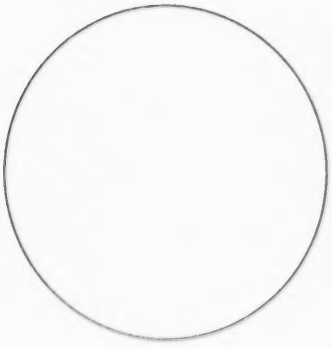
9. The boy's mom only has one eye in the center of her face and no nose. She uses her antennae to smell. Draw her eye.

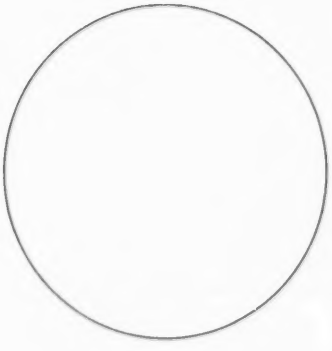
10. Turn your paper over, write your first name and last initial in cursive.











APPENDIX F

POST PARENT SURVEY

Listening Survey

Please complete the following survey regarding your third grader's listening. Our class has been working this semester to improve listening skills and I am interested to know if any of these skills have been transferred to listening at home. Thank you.

1. In general, I feel my child listens better than at the beginning of third grade.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

2. In general, I feel that my child follows oral directions better than at the beginning of third grade.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

3. How often do you have to repeat oral directions to your child?

Never Sometimes Often Always

4. What behaviors does your child exhibit that show that he or she **is not** listening?

4. What behaviors does your child exhibit that show that he or she **is** listening?

5. Do you feel that there has been an improvement in your child's ability to listen since the beginning of third grade?

Yes No

Please explain.

Listening Survey

Please complete the following survey regarding your fourth grader's listening. Our class has been working this semester to improve listening skills and I am interested to know if any of these skills have been transferred to listening at home. Thank you.

6. In general, I feel my child listens better than at the beginning of fourth grade.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

7. In general, I feel that my child follows oral directions better than at the beginning of fourth grade.

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

8. How often do you have to repeat oral directions to your child?

Never Sometimes Often Always

4. What behaviors does your child exhibit that show that he or she **is not** listening?

9. What behaviors does your child exhibit that show that he or she **is** listening?

10. Do you feel that there has been an improvement in your child's ability to listen since the beginning of fourth grade?

Yes No

Please explain.